



CAAT Academic  
Negotiating Team

TO: CAAT Academic Local Presidents  
FROM: Ted Montgomery, Negotiating Team Chair  
DATE: February 20, 2006  
RE: Before March 7

Management continues to stonewall on settlement. In fifteen days they may plunge the college system into a strike that should be avoided – but only if they negotiate responsibly.

On February 15 and 16, the faculty team put forward two different “without prejudice” positions. Management’s February newsletter correctly refers to these as “exploring possible options for settlement.”

The management newsletter asserts that: “The Union did not change their workload or wage demands.” I can assure you that the faculty union’s input into these explorations did contain change to our wage position and significant changes to our workload positions. As the discussions are without prejudice, I cannot report at all on management positions not even whether or not they took any positions. Reports have been given to local presidents by bargaining team contacts.

Asserting that the current offer on the table is adequate is simply stubborn indifference to reality. That offer has led faculty to vote over 80% in favour of a strike. We now see a recurring pattern in management pronouncements – they want the Quality Improvement Funds to be spent only on a college-by-college basis. That is why they will not negotiate systemic changes. Rae, of course, found systemic problems. Rae knew that solutions applied college-by-college would only lead to the same old “poster child for efficiency gains.” The continued decline in quality that Rae identified is the colleges’ legacy of the last decade.

That is why management refuses to negotiate, and in an Orwellian doublespeak, claims that the faculty have not moved. Faculty can only hope that college presidents and Ministry officials are not being fed and misled by the same half-truths and disinformation. It is imperative that they know that the faculty union team has moved, and has responsible, system-wide settlement options available to management.

On the wage issue, management continues to compare their offer to college support staff and to other public service workers. They continue to ignore the actual high school settlements at their full value. The university settlements – our other comparator group – are never mentioned at all by this management team. Of course not, because the university settlements are higher.

Interestingly, we learned from the CAAT Pension Trustees that management had been campaigning hard to increase the pension contributions we make by another 1.5% this year. That means that the colleges were prepared – actually lobbying – to increase the colleges’ matching contribution by 1.5% also. The union-side Plan Trustees and Sponsors stopped that initiative and the contributions will not increase this year or next. [We can expect an increase not too far into the future.] So ...the colleges have 1.5% of the total payroll for all pension-eligible employees that they were prepared to spend on pension contribution, but they tell us they cannot afford our salary demand. One can only wonder where that 1.5% is headed.

Faculty, knowing that this would be a crucial round of negotiations sent an experienced team to the table. Four of the seven members have been on the last three teams that successfully negotiated settlements that both parties signed off and agreed to without a strike. Two others were on at least one of those teams. The management team has only one member with experience in a previous round of academic negotiations.

At a chance breakfast meeting, a prominent member of the management team in speaking to one of the members of the faculty team said this about negotiations: "It's only a game." It is not a game! It is not a game in any way, shape, or form to the faculty bargaining team and to 9000 college faculty prepared to go on strike for a fair and responsible contract – a contract that addresses systemic quality problems and that addresses college student needs. Faculty are not going to allow the college system fall into further decline.

---

Between now and March 7, the team encourages all faculty to arrange a meeting with, or to email, or to telephone your member of the provincial legislature. Whether in government or opposition, it's important that the decision-makers hear us. It's important that they learn what is truly going on.

It is important also that they hear from college students and those interesting in doing something to improve quality in the college system.

Frequently, requests of this type are accompanied by speaker's notes. I don't think college faculty need such notes. We have experienced the issues first hand. We want what Rae said the colleges need. We want what the government has funded for – improvements to quality. We know, as both Rae in 2005 and Michael Skolnik, in 1985 knew: that colleges will not deliver quality if it is left in the hands of college management. Higher level college managers may believe they are the guardians of quality – that's what Skolnik found – but every independent study has found the opposite to be true.

Tell your students what is at stake – Here are some excerpts from Premier McGuinty's May 13, 2005 speech at Ryerson on higher education in Ontario:

I didn't ask Bob Rae to prepare his report so I could shelve it.

By quality, we mean more faculty at colleges and universities, to accommodate higher enrolments and help students succeed, more faculty time for students, more students completing their undergraduate programs and going on to grad school and easier movement for students between colleges and universities.

In Wednesday's Budget, we announced Reaching Higher -- our plan to invest an additional \$6.2 billion in our universities, colleges, and training programs over the next five years.

It will increase annual funding for higher education by 39 per cent by 2009-10... We will add another \$683 million this year, growing to a billion new dollars next year.

I know that the people who deliver our training and apprenticeship programs are up to the challenge -- and they're going to meet it.

College faculty want the same things. We want more faculty time for students. We should not have to go on strike to achieve this shared goal. But we are certainly prepared to do so if that is what it takes.

Ted Montgomery, Chair, Faculty Negotiating Team